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good, and they are remarkably free from printer's errors.

O. B. SUPER.

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### CHAUCER.

*Chaucers Liv og Digting.* Af OTTO JESPERSEN. Studier fra Sprog—og Oldtidsforskning udg. af det philologiskhistoriske Samfund. Kjøbenhavn: Kleins Forlag. 1893.

EARLY English literature has been so generally neglected by Scandinavian scholars that the appearance of a Danish work on Chaucer deserves a warm welcome at our hands. Particularly is this the case when the title-page bears the name of Dr. Otto Jespersen. The favorable impression made by this author's recent treatment of the English case is repeated here. While not pretending to be either an original contribution to the study of Chaucer, or a full account of what has been accomplished in this direction by other scholars, Dr. Jespersen's monograph may serve as an admirable guide to Danish students of our first great modern poet. The author has carefully considered and compared the claims of the various theories with regard to Chaucer's life and works and while many may fail to accept the result reached by him, all must at least acknowledge their perfect honesty. One strange omission among the authorities consulted should not be allowed to pass unnoticed. Although the author quotes from Bierfreund's 'Kulturbserere,' a Danish work published in 1892, he makes no mention of Lounsbury's 'Studies in Chaucer,' which appeared in the same year.

In examining a work of this kind, the first question that naturally suggests itself is the apportioning of space to the various topics, and this particularly in the first part, the biographical. While this is largely a matter of individual judgment, it would seem unwise to devote less than half a page to the vexed question of the date of Chaucer's birth, four pages to the far less important claim of the poet's marital unhappiness, and less than a page to the date of his marriage and the identity of his wife.

After dismissing with appropriate brevity the claim for 1328 as the year of Chaucer's birth,

in connection with which he repeats the misstatement with regard to the occurrence of this date on the monument in the Abbey, the author proceeds to consider the significance of the record of Chaucer's oath. Giving only the first statement in this, which is rather misleadingly translated "godt og vel fyrrer," he adopts the date 1345, without stating the possibility of an earlier date.

In his study of the poet's works, to which three quarters of the space has wisely been devoted, Dr. Jespersen shows discrimination in selection, and critical taste in exposition. This latter quality is especially displayed in the admirable parallel drawn between the Decameron and the Canterbury Tales. Had Dr. Jespersen been acquainted with Lounsbury's work he would have found his arguments in favor of the independence of the tales anticipated, and his case against the English and Germans mightily strengthened. Special note should be taken of the graceful translation of two Chaucerian rondeaux by Niels Möller, printed here for the first time.

We shall look forward with interest to further English studies by Dr. Jespersen.

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### CORRESPONDENCE.

#### THE LEGEND OF THE HOLY GRAIL.

TO THE EDITORS OF MOD. LANG. NOTES:

SIRS:—In my paper on "The Legend of the Holy Grail" in Vol. viii., No. 1 of the *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, I have spoken of the Thornton Sir Perceval in terms which I fear may lead to a misunderstanding. I do not, of course, claim for this poem in its present form such antiquity as my unguarded statements might lead one to suppose, and it is for the purpose of forestalling criticism that I beg space for this note. An unhappy peculiarity of all the Holy Grail romances, even of Chrestien's and of the mabinogi, is that they are none of them originals. The English poem, Sir Perceval of Galles, is contained in the Thornton Manuscript, a book compiled, about 1440, by Robert Thornton, of East Newton, Yorkshire. Its

author cannot even be conjectured. From the language I should judge that it had been written in the preceding century. J. O. Halliwell, editing it in 1844, had no doubt that it was a translation of the Conte du Graal. By calling it one of the earliest known sources of the legend, I mean that it is *not* a translation of any part of the Conte du Graal, nor of any other romance that has come down to us. It therefore represents a phase of the legend which, with those represented in the mabinogi and in Chrestien's part of the Conte du Graal, may be considered as the earliest that have survived. That the author of Sir Perceval had read and in some respects imitated the poem of Chrestien, there can be no disputing, but the divergences are so numerous and important, that it is reasonable to attribute them to some unknown original, which had an influence upon the English writer equal to that exercised by Chrestien.

GEORGE MCLEAN HARPER.

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#### OLD ENGLISH POETRY.

TO THE EDITORS OF MOD. LANG. NOTES:

SIRS:—In the February number of MOD. LANG. NOTES appeared an interesting comparison, by Professor Cook, of Shelley's "Lines written among the Euganean Hills" and the same poetic conception found in Old Norse.

His statement as to the "essential poetic quality of our Old English verse" is true and timely. No where in early germanic poetry is such a beautiful conception of Nature found, poetic figures that are so simple and yet so grand. The following passages suggest themselves:

*oð þät hrefn blaca, heofones wynne  
blið-heort bodode. þä cöm beorht sunne  
scacan ofer grundas.*

Beowulf, l. 1802.

*nê þis ne dagað ðastan, nê hêr draca ne  
flêogeð;* l. 3.

*hräfen wandrode.*

*sweart ond seato-brün.* l. 34.

"Finnsburg Fragment."

After reading these lines, in or away from their natural setting, how easy it is to feel the sentiment contained in the following:

Mid the mountains Euganean  
I stood listening to the poan  
With which the legion'd rooks did hail  
The Sun's uprise majestic,  
Gathering round with wings all hoar,  
Though the dewy mist they soar  
Like gray shades, till the eastern heaven  
Bursts,

The lines cited from the "Finnsburg Fragment" find, perhaps, a more suggestive parallel in von Eichendorff's "Eginhard und Emma":

Es ist schon wieder Abend, wunderbar  
verzerrt die Welt da draussen sich; wie Drachen  
Mit grauen Nebelschweifn übern Walde  
Schlingt sich der Höhenrauch, und drunter liegts  
So lauernd still, wie finst'rer Rache Grimm.

GLEN LEVIN SWIGGETT.

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#### THE MEANING OF THE WORD "CHINA."

TO THE EDITORS OF MOD. LANG. NOTES:

SIRS:—The word *china* has been referred to by Mr. F. M. Page in MOD. LANG. NOTES, Vol. 8, at page 26, who says it is the "common name given to native women on the camps," in the Argentine Republic. Also, by Dr. Karl Lentzner at page 85 of the same volume, who says:

"With regard to the word *china*, in Guatemala and Nicaragua it has quite a different meaning from that known elsewhere; for example in Peru, where it means a half-caste of Indian and European parents. In Guatemala *china*, is the nursemaid, and *chinear* means 'to look after children.'"

*China* is not Spanish but a Quichua word, and Garcilaso de la Vega, whose mother was a *palla*, or woman of the Inca blood, and his father one of the *conquistadores* says in his 'Comentarios reales del Perú,' parte primera, foja 68. 1., "China llman á la Doncella muchacha de servicio," that is: a maid servant is called *china*.

China is really a Quichua word and means female, *hembra*, and is used to distinguish the sex of animals. The book is not at hand just now but the word may be found in Clement R. Markham's 'Grammar and Dictionary of the Quichua,' published by Trübner.

In connection with the word it may be said that all through the Argentine Republic it is used for a servant—a woman of the lower class; it is used in the diminutive *chinita*, and a man who is given to company of that kind is said to be *muy chinitero*.

B. W. GREEN.

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